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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Office of  
Public Affairs

# Selected Speeches and News Releases

March 19 - March 24, 1992

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Commemorating National Nutrition Month, March 24.

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# Statement

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

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Prepared for delivery by Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan,  
Commemorating National Nutrition Month, March 24.

I am pleased to join the American Dietetic Association in promoting health during National Nutrition Month. Many years ago, Emerson said, "Health is the first wealth." Today, no cause is more important than ensuring the health of our people. All things are possible for a person who is able and well. As a nation so abundantly able to feed its citizens, we must not be content until every American's nutritional well-being is certain.

Along with many others, we at the USDA have an important role to play in that effort. Sixty percent of USDA's budget—over \$32 billion in 1992—is spent on food and nutrition programs, most of which directly improves the nutritional health of the neediest Americans. In addition, USDA's nutrition education programs help improve the lives of all Americans, and are a critical part of our food assistance programs.

To better people's lives, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) directly improves health and reduces medical costs for this vulnerable population. For 1993, the president has requested an increase of \$240 million in WIC's budget. This will allow WIC to serve 100,000 more participants, bringing the total cared for to 5.4 million. In addition, our new Nutrition Education Initiative includes \$12.5 million to enable USDA's Extension Service to provide intensive nutrition education to 50,000 more of the neediest WIC mothers.

As part of our initiative to educate all Americans, and especially to reach children and adults who lack access to nutrition information because of financial, cultural, or educational barriers, USDA has begun work to better coordinate the activities of all eight USDA agencies involved in nutrition education, and also proposes a 20-percent funding increase for 1993.

A major focus will be helping child nutrition programs serve meals that meet the 1990 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, published by the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. These guidelines recommend eating a variety of foods; maintaining a healthy

weight; choosing a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits and grain products—one that is low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol; using sugars, salt and sodium only in moderation; and drinking alcoholic beverages in moderation, if at all.

To help schools meet this standard, we now provide commodities lower in fats, sugar and salt. We are working with selected schools to test menus which reduce fat, salt and sugar—and still give children the foods they like. This spring, USDA will distribute Nutrition Guidance for Child Nutrition Programs to 300,000 food service operators in schools, child care centers and family day care homes. And we will spend an additional \$5 million on developing nutrition education materials for preschool children and child care providers.

To help consumers make good food choices, we recently added nutrition information to USDA's Meat & Poultry Hotline. Expert home economists and nutritionists staff the Hotline, responding to more than 96,000 questions per year.

Finally, to reach the growing Hispanic population in the United States, USDA now makes the Dietary Guidelines available in Spanish. The Nutrition Education Initiative also proposes \$4.5 million in grant funds to be awarded through the Extension Service and the Food Stamp Program to states and communities which develop nutrition messages targeted on hard-to-reach adults.

All these programs are making a difference in the health of Americans. For the USDA, in the years to come, we hope to be able to provide every American either with the knowledge or the ability to eat well.

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# News Releases

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## ELEVEN APPOINTED TO WELFARE SIMPLIFICATION COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON, March 19—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today appointed 11 people to serve on a new committee that will study ways to simplify and coordinate the efforts of the federal government's welfare programs.

Madigan said the Welfare Simplification Committee, which was established by Congress, will look at all of the government's public assistance programs, including food programs, cash assistance, medical care and housing.

"It is important that the nation's assistance programs work together," Madigan said. "We need to avoid duplication of effort, which can cost taxpayers money. We also need to be sure it's not unnecessarily complicated to use these programs, either for the people who receive the benefits or for the people who administer them."

Madigan said the committee is to present a report to Congress by July 1993 which:

- Identifies program policies that, because of their differences, may make it difficult for people to apply for and receive benefits if they qualify for more than one assistance program. The committee also will look at how differing policies limit program administrators in providing appropriate, timely benefits.

- Examines reasons for program policy differences.

- Recommends simplified programs and practices to reduce application and administration problems, and describes the impact of the recommended changes on cost, participation and state programs.

The law establishing the committee empowers the secretary of agriculture to appoint members in consultation with the secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development. The three departments oversee all the nation's public assistance programs.

Appointed to the committee were:

Mary Deyampert, Fayetteville, N.C.; Claire Traylor, Wheat Ridge, Colo.; Timothy Carey, Montrose, N.Y.; Robert Helms, Silver Spring, Md.; Alphonso Jackson, Dallas, Texas; Juan Ramos, Anthony, N.M.; Ray Garcia, El Monte, Calif.; Zy Weinberg, Sacramento, Calif.; Thomas Eichler, Dover, Del.; and Maria Bledsoe, Kansas City, Kan. Sammie Lynn Puett, Knoxville, Tenn., was appointed to chair the committee.

Phil Shanholtzer (703) 305-2313

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## **MADIGAN ANNOUNCES USDA ACTIONS TO REDUCE REGULATORY BURDENS, IMPROVE SERVICES**

WASHINGTON, March 19—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced a series of actions by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that would provide more than \$1 billion in economic relief to business and consumers by reducing regulatory burdens and improving USDA services.

“I am announcing today 13 steps to ease or modify key regulatory burdens that could reduce the drag on the economy by \$1 billion,” Madigan said. “This package is designed to cut costs, reduce paperwork, streamline rules, encourage economic growth and make programs easier to use.”

Today’s actions result from a federal regulatory review ordered by President Bush in his State of the Union address Jan. 28, Madigan said.

In that order, Bush directed executive branch agencies to improve regulations and programs to support economic growth and provide more efficient service to the public.

“These are USDA’s first steps to meet the goals of the president’s order,” Madigan said. “They cover many areas among the department’s enormous array of responsibilities—from nutrition labeling to grain inspection, from housing assistance to timber management, from farm loans to food aid for low-income families.

Following are the specific regulatory changes and proposals Madigan announced:

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service will implement wider use of electronic “debit cards” under its Food Stamp Program, which allow recipients to make food purchases with these cards instead of stamps.

Madigan said the new system will reduce food stamp fraud, increase convenience of the program for participants, and reduce processing burdens for retailers. FNS also will take steps to help food stamp beneficiaries become more self-reliant. And, under its Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), FNS will propose a new food package designed to meet the specific nutritional needs of breastfeeding women.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service will propose measures to reduce costs incurred by businesses in complying with new federal rules requiring nutrition labels on retail meat and poultry products. FSIS will propose exempting small businesses from the labeling requirement; permitting use of database values in establishing nutritional content, instead of requiring individual laboratory analysis for each new product. These changes would save an estimated \$650 million. FSIS also will change the implementation date of the labeling requirement from May 1993 to May 1994, for a savings estimated at \$210 million. These steps ensure complete and accurate information for consumers.

FSIS also will propose to expand the number of products that qualify for generic, pre-approved labels. Madigan said this change would reduce the cost of developing new meat and poultry retail products, while maintaining complete and accurate information on the labels.

USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service will create a new Official Commercial Inspection Service, utilizing FGIS authorized, private inspectors and equipment. The system should reduce time and cost of inspecting grain, Madigan said, and provide a more flexible grain inspection service for farmers, small-to-moderate size elevators and processors. Annual savings are estimated at \$350,000 to \$2.2 million.

USDA's Forest Service will propose reducing delays in agency actions by substituting public notice and comment before decisions are made for the appeals process in land management decisions. Current procedures have delayed decisions and hamstrung the agency, resulting in more than 3,000 appeals in the past two years, Madigan said. This comes at a time when lumber costs have hit an all-time high.

USDA's Farmers Home Administration will propose streamlining the application process for its Single Family Housing Program to reduce the burden of paperwork on agency staff and potential homeowners. FmHA will also propose loosening design restrictions for houses constructed under the program, which would allow purchasers greater choice in housing designs.

In addition, FmHA will implement a program allowing the sale or lease of farmland held in the FmHA inventory after being held one year in the inventory, instead of the current three. Madigan said this action would allow for the sale or lease of up to 879,000 acres of currently dormant farm land, and would generate an estimated \$89 million in annual gross farm income.

FmHA also plans to implement a program providing special financial assistance to new farmers and ranchers, under a provision of the 1990 Farm Bill. The agency will also inaugurate a program to allow new farmers and ranchers priority access to farms and land held in the FmHA inventory.

FmHA also will reduce paperwork for loan applications under the agency's farmer loan programs, which will reduce farmers' time and costs in applying for the loans.

FmHA also will propose changes in its Rural Housing Loan Guarantee Program to reduce paperwork and processing, and conform loan servicing and liquidation requirements to private-sector practices. These changes would reduce time and cost to borrowers, and would make the program more attractive to commercial lenders, Madigan said.

And, FmHA will adjust its farmer loan program to increase benefits to farmers who have been beset by natural disasters in two of the preceding five crop years. This change will allow applicants to exclude the two crop years affected by the disasters when calculating a normal average yield in a projected plan of operation.

Roger Runnigen (202) 720-4623

Eric Ruff (202) 720-4623

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## **USDA TO PROVIDE ENHANCED WIC PACKAGE FOR BREASTFEEDING MOMS**

WASHINGTON, March 19—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to provide a larger food package to breastfeeding women who participate in the department's Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, which administers WIC, will publish proposed rules today in the Federal Register to increase the amounts of juice, cheese and legumes, and to add carrots and canned

tuna to the package provided to breastfeeding mothers whose infants do not receive formula from the program.

“We encourage women to breastfeed their babies,” said Catherine Bertini, assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer services. “There is a great deal of evidence that breastfeeding is best for both mother and baby in the first months of an infant’s life.”

“This enhanced food package will provide additional nutritional support for women who make that choice,” she said. “It’s a modification to meet the needs of breastfeeding participants more effectively.”

Increased incidence of breastfeeding has been established as one of the goals of “Healthy People 2000,” the national health promotion and disease prevention objectives. “The new WIC package is just the latest in a series of continuing efforts by USDA to promote it,” Bertini said.

“Among many other activities, we have sponsored ongoing semi-annual meetings of the Breastfeeding Promotion Consortium to exchange information on how government and private health interests can work together for this common goal,” Bertini said.

Other efforts have included study grants to states, publications, plans for a national media campaign, and working with other federal and private organizations to promote breastfeeding, she said.

One reason USDA decided to increase the food allotment is a perception that mothers who bottle-feed their babies receive a larger food package from WIC than mothers who breastfeed, Bertini said. The program provides several different food packages aimed at meeting the nutritional needs of particular groups of participants.

“Because WIC provides formula for bottle-fed babies, the combination of the infant’s package and the mother’s package is actually larger for mothers who choose not to breastfeed,” Bertini said. “It could be perceived that you get more from WIC if you don’t breastfeed, and that could actually discourage some mothers from breastfeeding their babies.”

The WIC program provides supplemental food, health care referrals and nutrition education to low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children up to age 5. Participants in some states receive food directly, while most receive vouchers that can be redeemed at food stores for specific foods that are high in protein, calcium, iron and vitamins A and C.

Bertini said the public will be invited to comment on the proposed regulations for 45 days after they are published.

Phil Shanholtzer (703) 305-2313

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## **CCC ANNOUNCES 1992-CROP HONEY LOAN RATE AT 53.8 CENTS**

WASHINGTON, March 20—Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced that effective April 1 the price support loan rate for 1992-crop honey will be 53.8 cents per pound for all colors and classes, unchanged from the rate for 1991-crop honey.

Honey loans for 1992-crop honey will be available at county offices of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service on April 1.

John Carlin Ryan (202) 720-8207

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## **USDA SEEKS COMMENTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF RABIES VACCINE FIELD TEST**

WASHINGTON, March 20—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today asked for public comments on an environmental assessment for field testing a live, genetically engineered, vaccinia-vectored rabies vaccine in New Jersey.

The assessment reports USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service reached a preliminary conclusion that field testing the vaccine would not have a significant impact on the human environment or wildlife.

Under the Virus-Serum-Toxin Act, a veterinary biological product must be shown to be pure, safe, potent and effective before it can be licensed. If scientific data on the product indicates it poses no threat to the human environment and wildlife, APHIS authorizes the required field testing.

The Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, Philadelphia, Pa., asked to conduct a field trial of the vaccine in Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland Counties, N.J., about April 15. Previous approved field trials of the same vaccine were initiated on Parramore Island, Va.,

August 1990, and in Sullivan County, Pa., in June 1991. Information from these trials was used to assess the environmental impact the vaccine would have in New Jersey.

The vaccine is intended to immunize animals in the wild from rabies. The vaccine is inserted into a capsule and then enclosed in bait meant to attract specific types of animals. The field trials target raccoons because they are the major reservoir and transmitter of rabies in the northeastern United States.

Notice of the document's availability was published in today's Federal Register. Comments will be accepted if they are received on or before April 7. An original and three copies of written comments referring to docket 92-038 should be sent to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Room 804 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. APHIS will make a final determination on the environmental impact after reviewing the comments.

A copy of the document is available for public inspection at USDA, Rm. 1141-S, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Copies also are available from Robert B. Miller, Biotechnology, Biologics, and Environmental Protection, APHIS, USDA, Room 832 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782; telephone, (301) 436-5863.

Sharon Scheidhauer, (301) 436-7776.

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## **U.S. TO DONATE AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES TO RUSSIA**

WASHINGTON, March 20—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture will donate 18,500 metric tons of U.S. agricultural commodities to the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) for distribution to needy citizens in cities located in the Ural mountain region of Russia.

“The commodities in this \$15.2 million donation will be provided to the most at-risk populations in principle cities throughout the Ural Mountains region,” said Madigan. “The primary recipients will be the elderly, infirm, handicapped and school-age children.”

The donation includes approximately \$8.1 million in commodities and \$7.1 million in transportation costs. Commodities include 15,000 metric

tons of wheat flour, 1,000 tons of vegetable oil, 1,500 tons of beans and 1000 tons of nonfat dry milk.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will pay for ocean and inland transportation of the agricultural commodities to distribution sites.

The nonfat dry milk will be provided under Section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949. The other commodities will be provided under USDA's Food for Progress program. The supply period is fiscal 1992.

To date, USDA has signed agreements with eight private voluntary organizations to provide \$130.5 million in humanitarian assistance to newly independent states of the former Soviet Union:

- The American Diocese of the Armenian Church received \$15 million in commodities and transportation for use in Armenia;

- The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee received \$9 million in commodities and transportation for use in Russia;

- Catholic Relief Services received \$41 million in commodities and transportation for use in Russia;

- World Vision Relief and Development received \$7.5 million for commodities and transportation for use in Armenia;

- Brother's Brother received \$16.8 million for commodities and transportation for use in Russia;

- Adventist Development Relief Agency International received \$11.5 million for commodities and transportation for use in Russia;

- The American National Red Cross received \$14.5 million for commodities and transportation for use in Turkmenistan;

- CARE received \$15.2 million for commodities and transportation for use in Russia.

For more information, contact James F. Keefer, Foreign Agricultural Service, (202) 720-5263.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 720-3448

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## **FOREST SERVICE SETS ANOTHER REFORESTATION RECORD IN 1991**

WASHINGTON, March 24—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service today reported it reforested 503,000 acres—almost 800 square miles—on national forests during the 1991 fiscal year, exceeding the record set in 1990 by 5,000 acres.

“This is the third year in a row we have set a new reforestation record,” said Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson.

Robertson said the unprecedented level of tree planting and reforestation was due to rehabilitation efforts on lands burned by the major wildfires of 1987 and 1988, as well as in areas affected by Hurricane Hugo and insect damage.

These efforts were in addition to reforestation associated with timber harvest over the past four years.

“We reforest with tree species which are native and adapted to each particular site, and we reforest in such a way that a diversity of species is maintained across the landscape,” Robertson said.

Of the total area reforested in FY 1991, approximately 309,000 acres were planted with over 160 million trees. The remaining 194,000 acres were reforested through natural regeneration, either by seeds falling from nearby trees onto areas prepared by the Forest Service or through natural sprouting.

John Mahoney (202) 205-1060

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## **1992 NO-NET-COST ASSESSMENTS ANNOUNCED FOR FIRE-CURED, DARK-AIR CURED TOBACCOS**

WASHINGTON, March 24—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today said producers of 1992-crop Kentucky and Tennessee dark air-cured (types 35-36) and fire-cured (types 22-23) tobacco must agree to pay no-net-cost assessments on all marketings of these tobaccos to qualify for price support loans.

No-net-cost assessments are .8915 cents per pound for dark air-cured (types 35-36) and 1.2895 cents per pound for fire-cured (types 22-23) tobaccos. The no-net-cost assessments ensure the tobacco price support

program will be operated at no-net-cost to taxpayers as required by the No-Net-Cost Tobacco Program Act of 1982.

The no-net-cost assessment is in addition to the marketing assessment of 1.217 cents per pound for dark air-cured (types 35-36) and 1.421 cents per pound for fire-cured (types 22-23) tobaccos. The marketing assessments will be shared equally between producers and purchasers with each paying .6085 cents per pound for dark air-cured (types 35-36) and .7105 cents per pound for fire-cured (types 22-23) tobaccos as required by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 which states that producers and purchasers of 1991 through 1995 crops of these tobaccos must each pay a marketing assessment equal to .5 percent of the national price support level for each kind of tobacco on each pound marketed.

The no-net-cost assessment, plus the 1992 marketing assessment, is a total of 1.5 cents per pound being collected from producers on each pound of dark air-cured (types 35-36) and 2 cents per pound for fire-cured (types 22-23) tobaccos.

Before reaching a final determination on the no-net-cost assessments, USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation consulted with the Eastern Dark-Fired Tobacco Growers Association, the Western Dark-Fired Tobacco Growers Association and the Stemming District Tobacco Association, the producer-owned associations through which price support is made available for Kentucky and Tennessee dark air-cured (types 35-36) and fire-cured (types 22-23) tobaccos.

Robert Feist (202) 720-6789

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## **UNITED STATES TO PROVIDE FOOD AID TO COTE D'IVOIRE**

WASHINGTON, March 24—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced the United States will provide \$5 million in food aid for Cote d'Ivoire under Title I of Public Law 480—the Food for Peace Program.

“This amount will allow purchase of approximately 17,000 metric tons of U.S. rice, which will provide a needed supplement to the food supply in Cote d'Ivoire,” Madigan said. “The action shows our continued commitment to providing much-needed commodities to developing countries.”

Madigan said PL-480 assistance also is important to U.S. agriculture because it helps secure and expand overseas markets for U.S. products.

The Food for Peace Program is a food aid and market development program focused on the needs of developing countries. It is operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service in cooperation with USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation.

Title I of the Food for Peace Program authorizes government-togovernment concessional sales, which combine low interest rates and repayment terms of up to 30 years on financing to purchase specified U.S. agricultural products.

The supply period is fiscal 1992. Purchase authorizations will be announced as issued and sales will be made by private U.S. traders on a competitive bid basis.

For more information, contact Lynne Reich or Casey Bean at (202) 720-5319. For operational details, call (202) 720-5780.

Rebecca Broeking (202) 720-0328

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## **U.S. DONATES AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES TO BYELARUS**

WASHINGTON, March 24—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture will donate 3,550 metric tons of U.S. agricultural commodities to CitiHope International for distribution to needy people in Byelarus, a newly independent republic of the former Soviet Union.

“The donated commodities will be provided free of charge to the neediest people in the Crescent Region of Chernobyl in the Republic of Byelarus,” Madigan said. “The commodities will be delivered to families, and social service institutions such as hospitals, orphanages, schools, and homes for the elderly and the handicapped.”

The \$4.5 million donation includes \$2.8 million in commodities and \$1.7 million in freight costs. Commodities include 200 metric tons of U.S. nonfat dry milk, 1,500 tons of wheat flour, 1,000 tons of rice, 500 tons of vegetable oil and 350 tons of infant formula.

USDA will pay ocean and inland transportation of the agricultural commodities to distribution sites.

The commodities will be distributed in the cities of Gomel Oblast, Mogilev Oblast and Brest Oblast, and their surrounding areas.

The nonfat dry milk will be provided under Section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949. The other commodities will be provided under USDA's Food for Progress program. The supply period is U.S. fiscal 1992.

To date, USDA has signed agreements with nine private voluntary organizations to provide \$135 million in humanitarian assistance to newly independent states of the former Soviet Union:

- The American Diocese of the Armenian Church received \$15 million in commodities and transportation for use in Armenia;

- The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee received \$9 million in commodities and transportation for use in Russia;

- Catholic Relief Services received \$41 million in commodities and transportation for use in Russia;

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